

# Gosden House School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125452
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	315236
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	James Bowden

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs J St Aubyn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J David
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Horsham Road Bramley Guildford GU5 0AH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01483 892008
<b>Fax number</b>	01483 894057

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Gosden House caters for learners with complex learning difficulties. It is unusual in that it also offers residential education for up to 32 boarders. There are currently more boys than girls in the Foundation Stage to Year 6. There are only girls in the secondary section. As part of the school's outreach programme, learners from mainstream schools attend on a sessional basis throughout the school year and some Gosden students attend mainstream schools. The school is part of a local federation of local secondary schools and a sixth form college. In addition, it is a member of a confederation of primary and secondary schools in the local area.

All learners have a statement of special educational need. In Years R to 6, the majority have speech, language and communication difficulties and a tenth have moderate learning difficulties as their main need. This profile is reversed in Years 7 to 11. The great majority of learners are of White British background, a tenth being from a broad range of minority ethnic groups. The headteacher is responsible for both care and education in the school.

The school has been awarded the Intermediate International Schools' Award and Healthy Schools' Award.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This outstandingly successful school develops each learner's potential in a happy, secure and supportive environment. There is a specific focus on learning through the creative and expressive arts. The inspirational and charismatic headteacher leads the school highly effectively and, throughout his 25 years in post, has been pivotal in ensuring the school realises the motto of putting 'Children First' and looks for different and exciting ways to engage them. A significant strength in this respect is the impressive and unique link with the Globe Theatre in London, which has been maintained and developed even further since the last inspection. Each year, learners visit the theatre and, in the school, every learner takes an active part in an annual Shakespeare production. A further strength is the highly collaborative approach of the multi-disciplinary staff involved. These include specialist teachers, teaching assistants, care staff, a speech and language therapist, an occupational therapist, physiotherapist and a home-school link worker. The overwhelming majority of the large proportion of parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire are supportive of the work of the school. One, expressing the sentiments of many of the others, commented, 'My child is thriving at Gosden House, benefitting in particular from the imaginative and creative delivery of the curriculum and the dedication of the staff'.

Achievement is outstanding across the school because of the total care and education package it offers. Although standards on entry are very low because of learners' complex and varied needs, the progress they all make in relation to their starting points is excellent, particularly in developing their language and communication skills. Though standards remain low by the end of Year 6, all have made significant progress in developing their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. By the end of Year 11, many attain accreditation in literacy, numeracy, physical education and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) bronze and silver award scheme.

Learners' personal development and well-being are outstanding. All improve their self-esteem and independence and learn to interact positively with one another and the adults they work with. Many are proud of their achievements and express great delight when these are recognised in the Monday awards assemblies. Throughout the inspection, learners were keen to welcome the inspector and share their positive views of the education they receive. Their behaviour, which for some can be difficult when they join the school, improves considerably and is outstanding. Their attitudes to learning develop very well as a result. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, learners worked particularly well in small groups as they made cakes for their cake sale to raise money for an overseas charity they support. Though the attendance of some is hindered by medical needs, unauthorised absence is very low.

Teaching and learning are outstanding because teachers plan their lessons to ensure that the individual needs of all learners are met. Highly effective working relationships between teachers, other adults and learners underpin the quality of lessons. This helps ensure that excellent progress is made towards the targets set in learners' individual education plans (IEPs). A young learner commented, 'Teachers teach us brilliant things and we get smarter'. The outstanding curriculum meets fully the needs of all learners and contributes significantly to their personal development. Of particular note is the focus on the creative and expressive arts and a visual approach to learning. The residential section provides a seamless continuation of the daytime activities. There is a tremendous range of enrichment activities both within the school and off-site that broaden learners' curriculum experience. The school provides high quality care,

guidance and support for learners, striving to gain the best for them whatever the time of day. This includes both pastoral and academic support and guidance, which is underpinned very effectively with IEPs.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. Rigorous self-evaluation and very well focused development planning have ensured that the school has continued to improve and develop further since the previous inspection. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are robust and used to identify and share good practice. The school has much data available as the result of careful tracking of individual learners' progress. Not all leaders analyse this information in sufficient depth to inform their future planning. There is excellent liaison and collaboration between all the staff, which ensures that every learner really does matter and makes excellent progress. Governance is particularly effective and focused. In the light of the improvements and developments since the previous inspection, the clear direction set for further improvement, and the commitment and dedication of all staff, the school has excellent capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

There is no distinct Foundation Stage provision because there are only three learners within this age group. They are taught alongside Year 1 learners, where they are provided with a highly rewarding and enjoyable experience within a safe and caring environment. Because of this, they prosper and make rapid progress. Though standards on entry are very low, achievement is outstanding in relation to newly introduced early learning goals, particularly in terms of language and communication skills and personal, social and emotional development.

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 1**

Boarding provision is excellent. Currently, only one of the three boarding houses is in use because the other two are being upgraded in order to meet the new fire regulations. The bright, airy, cheerful and very well maintained accommodation meets fully the relevant National Minimum Standard. The most recent Ofsted Residential Special School report judged provision as outstanding. Two recommendations were made for improvement and both of these have been addressed. The Independent Care Standards monitoring visit earlier this year was similarly positive. Learners are safe, happy and very well supervised. Approximately 70% of learners in Years 8 to 10 take advantage of the rolling programme to provide residential experience. Many older learners use this opportunity to help them complete tasks for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme they follow. Learners appreciate the extra activities and enrichment opportunities provided for them. One commented how she was really looking forward to a planned theatre visit later in the week of the inspection.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Sharpen the analysis and use of data to inform planning for future strategies.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Learning is individualised with each learner having specific targets to meet their particular needs, with a focus on language and communication. As these skills improve, learners make

significant progress across the 'P' levels – levels that are below the standard National Curriculum levels. By the end of Year 6, most learners have improved their 'P' levels and some progress to Levels 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum in aspects of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In the secondary school, those girls who remain on roll, as well as new entrants, continue to make excellent progress. By the end of Year 11, their achievements enable all to progress to further education, training or work. Some, as a result of the creative arts focus, move on to follow performing arts courses in further education colleges.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Because of the exceptionally high level of individual support from all who work in the school, learners' confidence and personal development grow in leaps and bounds. A younger learner commented, 'We have lots of friends and we grow up so quickly'. Learners eat fresh and healthy food prepared on site and understand the importance of physical activity. Lunchtime arrangements are particularly impressive with adults and mixed-aged learners grouped together, which results in a really positive social occasion. Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and is celebrated throughout the building with excellent quality display of their work. Learners take an active part in the life of the school through involvement in the school council and local community projects and raise money through their own suggested activities for a range of national and international charities. Learners' group working skills are particularly strong and this, along with their progress in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT eases their transition to the next stage of their career.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Staff know their learners very well. Activities are made interesting, good quality resources are used well and effort and achievement are constantly rewarded. Oral praise and encouragement are used extremely effectively, which helps motivate learners very well. When appropriate, learners are encouraged to work independently. In a Year 8 personal, social and health education lesson, learners were enabled to work very effectively as small groups to discuss issues of 'fairness' and 'unfairness'. Their contributions to the ensuing discussion were sensible and thoughtful.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is exceptionally well matched to meet the needs of all learners. It is very effective in improving learners' skills in literacy and numeracy as well as developing their personal skills and attributes. The exceptional use of topic weeks involves learners in a wide variety of activities with a focus on visual and expressive aspects of learning. This improves greatly their motivation and enthusiasm, enriches the quality of their learning and broadens their depth of knowledge and understanding. The high quality range of accommodation, including extensive grounds, soft and hard play areas, and a music technology suite, enhances greatly the quality of provision and education that learners receive.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides an exceptionally strong, collaborative, caring and supportive environment where learners feel safe, develop their personal qualities and make outstanding progress towards the targets set for them in their lessons and IEPs. These include careful assessments of each learner in relation to their personal needs and the impact these may have on other people in the school. Learners' achievement and well-being are at the forefront of the school's ethos of care and education. Highly effective working relationships with a wide range of other specialist agencies and professionals contribute extensively. The school has been particularly successful in ensuring minimal unauthorised absence. Learners' personal development is closely tracked, as is their individual performance in relation their IEP targets. Learners are increasingly becoming involved in assessing their own progress and knowing the next objectives for learning and personal development.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher, his senior leadership group and those with other posts of responsibility set a clear direction and sense of purpose in providing high quality care and education. There is no complacency and academic targets are challenging. The new senior leadership staffing structure has helped clarify what the school needs to do to improve further. Currently, the use of assessment data, although good, are not always analysed accurately enough to provide sufficiently high quality information to inform future strategies. Resources, including staff, are managed particularly well to support improvements and to ensure learners make very good progress. The governing body is highly effective in its role as a critical and supportive friend of the school.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gosden House School, Guildford, GU5 0AH

I recently spent two days in your school, visited you in lessons, chatted to individuals, saw you involved in other activities around the school and spent some time in the senior boarding house. I particularly enjoyed the Monday morning assembly where many of you received awards for your achievements. The choir sang really well, as did the headteacher! I really appreciated being able to have a formal chat with groups of you from the junior and senior departments. I was pleased to hear how you enjoy your education, the extra activities you can join in, and the care and support you receive. I also know that your parents are very pleased with the education you receive.

Gosden House is an excellent school. This is because:

- the headteacher and his senior staff lead the school exceptionally well
- during your time at the school you make excellent progress in your learning and personal development
- all the adults who work with you make sure you are safe and extremely well cared for
- all the adults who work with you are really dedicated, have your best interests at heart and want to make sure you will do well in the future
- the curriculum and other activities in both the school and the residential block make your education very interesting.

However, there is one thing the school could do to make things better for you:

- use individual assessment about you in a better way.

Once again, many thanks for making me feel so welcome and good luck for your future.

Yours sincerely,

James Bowden

Lead Inspector